

3 - On The Road To Hollywood by DeTrashmouth

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Summary: Part 3 in this tale jumps ahead to the day when an older Trashmouth has finally achieved his goal and gotten away from Derry, gradually losing his memories of ever even growing up there. He struggles to make it in L.A. and live out his dream of becoming a comedian.

3 - On The Road To Hollywood

The day had *finally* come.

The further away from Maine he got, or more specifically, from Derry, the less Richie seemed to remember that he had ever even lived there. And the more he sunk into the persona, this character that had been created for him by the cats of Comedy Central, 'Rich Records,' what was left of the 'real' Richie Tozier slowly ceased to exist.

Los Angeles, California. Richie Tozier was finally home.

Not really, but it's how he felt the moment he cruised down the road and counted down the miles on the signs that eventually led him to Hollywood. He cranked up the radio to a Billy Idol tune which seemed appreciate for his travel to such a big city.

*Here she comes now, sayin' Mony Mony
Shoot 'em down, turn around, come on Mony
Hey! She give me love and I feel all right now
Yeah, you gotta toss and turn*

*And feel all right, yeah I feel all right
I said yeah, (yeah)
Yeah, (yeah)
Yeah! (Yeah!)
Yeah! (Yeah!)
Yeah! (Yeah!)*

*Cause you make me feel...
So good, so good, so good!
So fine, so fine!*

*It's all mine,
Well I feel all right
I said yeah, (yeah)
Yeah, (yeah)
Yeah! (Yeah!)
Yeah! (Yeah!)*

Yeah! (Yeah!)

Yeah! (Yeah!)

The place seemed like a never-ending story, minus a big luck dragon to let him ride around on. There were so many sights to see, he didn't even know where to begin. But what caught his eye before anything else was this great big store on Selma Ave called 'The Record Parlour.' He instantly got excited, almost nervous even, like he was having an anxiety fit. He hadn't felt that way since ... he couldn't remember. Rich parked his car and scoped the place out. Yeah, this definitely felt like home to him.

When he walked into the old record store, '*Gimme Danger*' by Iggy Pop and the Stooges was playing and Rich knew this was the place he was meant to be. He immediately ran to the 'classic rock' section, although truth be told, the store didn't offer anything made maybe after 1997. This place was an entire classic rock section, selling the best vinyls he'd ever laid all four of his eyes on.

"You a collector?" An older guy on a little step-stool looked down at Richie and asked.

"Me?" He shook his head. "No. Well, kind of. Maybe. More like, I want to be. I basically sold my whole collection to afford moving out here."

"I hear that," the old man chuckled harmlessly.

"That's how this store came to be."

"People selling their records?"

"Yeah," The old man stepped off the stool. "Every album in here was someone's baby at one point in time. Always promised the people I'd take good care of 'em. Make sure they're sold to the right people, ya know."

"Oh, yeah, no, I can completely respect that." Richie thumbed his way through a row of records, and his eyes lit up when he came across one that looked familiar to him. Not his, but one he had once owned.

T.N.T by AC/DC

"Ahhh, good eye, son!" The man exclaimed.

"Yeah, all four of them, haha.." Richie adjusted his glasses.

"Lemme guess, comedian?"

"One day, hopefully."

"You have the look. You want that album?" The old man asked.

"Oh, I couldn't afford it right now..." Richie sighed.

"I can see you have a true appreciation for the classics," the man smiled, taking the album from him carefully and inspecting it "Tell ya what, consider it a gift. Welcome to Hollywood," and handed it back to him.

"Are you serious!?"

"Hell no, boy!" He yanked it back from him, and Richie tried not to frown. But then the man smirked. "I was a comedian once, too."

"Oh, haha. Oh, yeah-" Richie held his finger out, trying to figure if this guy had ever been famous. The man shook him off.

"Nah, no one you would'a ever heard of. I didn't make it. Opened a record store instead." "Oh, I'm sorry."

"Don't be. I always said if I didn't get famous, I'd want to own a classic record store."

"Living the dream, right?" Richie chuckled.

"Hell no, you kiddin'? That whole 'if you enjoy what you do for a living you never work a day in your life' is fuckin' bullshit."

For some reason as the man said this, Richie thought he was suddenly time-traveling and meeting a future version of himself. Not bad. "You'll see... But just in case you make it, how about an autograph? That way I can say another celebrity shopped here once."

"Fair trade!" Richie smiled and followed the man over to the counter,

where he bagged the vinyl and Richie signed his name on a piece of paper that the older man took and read.

"You write too damn neat, Mr. Richie Tozier," The man said. "You need a signature."

"Oh... Should I try again?"

"Nah, this'll do." The man turned around and tossed the paper on a whole pile of them. Other wannabe's who didn't quite make it, Richie figured. Behind the man's desk, he had a bunch of autographs of celebrities who did, framed and hanging up.

"George Carlin was here?!" Richie thought he'd read on one of the scribbles.

"Bet your ass," The man smiled and tossed the bag at Richie. "Enjoy the album, and come again. Now, piss off, I've got work to do."

"Haha, thanks!"

"And hey, break a leg out there," the old man called out.

"Dat's wight, wabbit," Richie smirked.

As Rich walked out of the store he read a sign that claimed '*100,000+ Vinyl Records, Restored Audio Gear, Vintage Jukeboxes, & Music Posters.*' and knew without a doubt that when he had the money to spend, he'd be back. Bet your ass, he'd be back.

That was the first good thing to happen to Richie upon arriving in L.A... And as he'd soon find out, it'd be one of the only few good things to happen to him, at all. Hollywood was not for everyone, and as much as he felt he belonged there, he quickly realized that the rest of the nearly four million people all had come here foolishly chasing the same dream. The pile of autographs in The Record Parlour should have tipped him off, but Richie was overly confident, and was about to learn the hard way that comedy was more than just getting on stage and telling funny jokes. It was show business, not show fun.

Richie had grown up the class clown, and but all those years of being the center of attention after his parents neglected him seemed lost the

moment he stepped up on the stage. A little club called The Improv Space was where he booked his first gig. Well, 'gig' was giving it a little too much credit. This wasn't even an audition to do a real set on stage. The Improv Space was nothing more than a little karaoke style bar where anyone could get up and perform, and no one really paid attention. They didn't even get paid. If he was going to make a living following his dreams, he needed the practice of performing, but this just wasn't going to cut it.

A little guy with some lousy jokes had just finished, got a few slow claps, and then Richie saw his opening and took to the stage. He felt pretty good until he got up there, even though the place was dead, suddenly all the eyes were on him, and he felt the anxiety begin to set in.

"Uh-" The microphone screeched with horrible feedback, he tapped it a few times. The crowd cringed. "Hey, everybody. I know what you're thinking, 'who's this guy in the big glasses and Hawaiian shirt?' Haha, well, I'm Richie Tozier."

Nothing. Silence. The crowd, what little audience there was, didn't give a shit. Best to skip the introduction and just go on with the rest of his act, which he'd scribbled on his palm with a pen that was being sweated off by the moment.

"Uh, uh.." Richie stammered. "Just moved out here to L.A. It's great, isn't? Seeing that big Hollywood sign up close... Wish someone would'a told me it smells like one giant fart, though. What, do people here just let them rip all at once to create some kind of giant fart cloud or something? L.A: The Golden State, when it isn't brown and smells like shit," Richie laughed at his own joke. He was the only one who did. Honestly, it sounded so much funnier in his head...

"Speaking of shit," Richie sighed. "How bad am I sucking right now? Like, seriously, I've wanted to be a stand-up comedian all my life and now that I'm here, I don't think I could suck more even if I had a big fat cock in my mouth right now."

This... This got a reaction. Maybe that would be his shtick, talking about how much he sucked. The crowd didn't quite laugh, but there were a few snickers. Fuck his act, maybe self-loathe is what would

win the room over.

"Right? Like everyone wants to make it in Hollywood, but there's a good chance anyone who does took a shot in the mouth to get to where they are today. For my money that explains Tom Cruise..."

That one didn't really go over well, but any reaction was better than nothing at all.

"I'm glad to be here though. L.A. On Stage. It's better than just sitting in my tiny crap-hole apartment and watching TV all day like Beavis and Butt-head. "Uhhh.. uhuhah.. uhaha..." He laughed as Butt-head. "Hemh.. hehmeh.. heheugh.. yeah... Firee... FFFFIREEEEE..." Richie cackled as Beavis.

This is what got the biggest reaction of the room. His jokes may not have landed, but hearing them out loud, he could understand why. His voices had been pretty good, though.

The owner of the club signaled him that his time was up, and he thanked the room, only really getting as much of a reaction with applause as the last guy did. All in all... Rich had bombed pretty damn hard. But a few claps for his first time wasn't so bad - He quickly ran back up to the mic to get one last say in.

"Thank you for being gentle, it was my first time," Richie smirked. "And that's still more of a reaction I got after I lost my virginity."

This actually did get a little laugh, and he'd take it. Moving off stage, he was ready to just throw up as he tried to hurry out of the club. Rich was stopped by the manager, though.

"Hey, kid-" The big guy said.

"I'm sorry-" Richie tried.

"Huh?" The big guy frowned. "I was just going to say that wasn't too bad, and you should try again. Work on some material. Come back next week, we get a bigger crowd in here on Friday."

"...So, I can come back?" Richie asked, confused.

"Uh, yeah. Unless you shit on the stage, then I'd throw your ass out."

"I think I can manage not doing that," Richie joked.

He did come back that Friday night, too. He did so on the weekend, as well. Each time he got on the stage he did better than the last, until he was finally offered a spot at another club. Bigger than this one, which meant a larger crowd. He bombed sometimes, got some good laughs at others. Reactions varied, his actual jokes that he worked hard on never really brought the laughs. His complaining about how much he sucked always got a couple giggles, and his voices were a big hit.

Finally he began getting some actual reviews in from critics, who were relentless in how bad they trashed up and coming comedians. Every time he saw his name in the papers, small publishing's with only the faintest of recognition, he saw that most reviewers seemed to agree on one thing; 'While newcomer Richie Tozier doesn't always land his jokes, with a little practice, he could actually be a decent impressionist.'

Okay, he thought. Alright, yeah. Fair enough. He'd learned early on this was the kind of business where you checked your emotions at the door. It hurt, having people say how unfunny he could be. But still, he was never told he sucked bad enough that he should just quit. Even the most negative of reviews offered words of encouragement.

'Even George Carlin couldn't win them all. Richie Tozier definitely doesn't. His jokes are often crude in nature, leaning on foul language and self-pity as a crutch and relying too much on the negative aspects of his life to get the room on his side. He is still worthy of checking out, though. Even if it's just to see how badly he'll bomb during a set. Whether it's part of his act or not, his nerves seem to get the better of him more often than not. But when he does an impression of someone - be it a famous person or an infamous cartoon character, there's never a moment of doubt in the recognition of who it he's mimicking.'

Richie actually cut that article out and framed it, mainly taking from it that the critic had compared him to George Carlin.

One night during a show, he absolutely fucking killed it. While he may not have won the whole room over, this was his first time in the actual spot-light on a stage with real speakers. Some guy kept laughing at everything he said, hysterical, hyena roars of laughter. Finally Richie had to draw attention to it.

"Who the hell is that?" He asked. "Someone make sure that guy hasn't wet himself." The guy didn't take offense, he just laughed more, prompting Richie to laugh as well.

"So anyway, as I was saying. Wouldn't it be weird if humans lived like spiders? Like after fucking, she just turns around and kills us? I'd prefer that over the next six months of putting up with her bullshit, only for her to hurt you in every way possible. Like, fuck, just sink your fangs in and get it overly quickly, damn."

The crowd, and that guy, actually reacted to that rather well. People seemed to laugh most at subjects they could relate to.

"But even in the arachnid world, sometimes, it's rare, but sometimes the male can be slick enough to get away after the sex. Seriously, I'm not making that up. I watched a whole documentary about it, and then wondered what I was doing with my life that I had the kind of time to sit there watching a documentary about spiders fucking."

The guy in the back roared again, the others giggled ever so slightly.

"So I got thinking, is there like a spider-club where a bunch of these little guys sit around just shooting the shit about the one that always gets away? Like," He put on a ghetto voice, "'Hay you guyz know about Jimmy? shieeeeet, everybody know' bout Jimmy! He da' fastest spida' dere is. Ol' Jimmy fucked like, four spida' bitches in one day and he ALWAYS get' away! Hey look, dere he go again! Woohoo, Jimmaaahh! Get you suuum- OOp, Jimmy' dead," Richie frowned. "'Shouldn'a mess' wit dem black widows, mang.'"

The audience raved, but not as much as the mysterious man in the crowd with the annoying laugh. Best to end on a high note, leave 'em wanting more as they often do in the 'biz. That was also the night Richie had received an invitation to his first real Hollywood party, the manager gave him the address back stage and he was both

excited and left a tad bit dumbfounded.

"You fuckin' with me?" Rich asked as he took the paper.

"He watched your set and insisted I gave that to you," the manager said.

"BOB FUCKING SAGET?!" Richie yelled. "The guy from Full fuckin' House?"

"You haven't seen his stand-up, have you?" The manager grinned. "He's not exactly ... family friendly with his material."

I was made for Lovin' You' by Kiss played in his car as he drove around the dark downtown streets of L.A. looking for the house listed on the piece of paper he'd been given. Bob Saget, what the fuck was even going on anymore? After driving around and getting lost twice, he finally found the house. Not a big mansion party, but the place was packed, that was for sure. Took him twenty minutes just to find a place to park.

"Rich!" A man called from the across the room and crowd of people as Richie just walked in.. "Richie Tozier!" The small, sorta weaselly looking man hurried across the room and eagerly shook Richie's hand.

"I'm Steve Covall," he said. "I'm so glad you got my invitation!"

"I thought I was invited by uh..." It sounded stupid even saying it.

"Bob?" Steve smiled. "Yeah, we caught your set, it was great! He couldn't stop laughing!"

"Bob.. *Bob* 'couldn't stop laughing'" Richie asked. "Was he the one with that annoying fucking laugh that I called out on stage?"

"That's him!" Steve said eagerly. "You want to meet him?"

"Sure," Richie said. Why not? What was the worst that could happen? "Should I mention 'Full House,' or.."

"You could," Steve said as he led Richie through the room. There

were a lot of other comics there, a few of them Rich had known, others, he had no clue. "He might try to say you're kissing his ass if you do, though."

"Well," Richie began to quip. "Better to kiss his ass than suck his balls, right? Haha." Silence from Steve Covall. "Forget it, I'm kidding," he awkwardly laughed.

"Bob's this way."

"Alrighty."

Steve led Richie through the party, stopping every few seconds so people could say 'hi' and tell him he was funny. hilarious. hysterical. killed it on stage. Richie was still bad at responding to complimentary, it was new to him to have such appreciation for stuff that if he said anywhere other than the stage, would probably get his ass kicked. Offensive and crude humor was his specialty, though, and apparently had even gotten the attention of the guy from 'Full House.'

When he and Steve finally got into the little back room, Richie honestly hadn't known what he'd expect. He had such a vision of this guy making safe-for-tv family kind of humor. But apparently that wasn't the case at all. Of all the comics Richie had heard of or seen performed, he always ignored the likes of Mr. 'Danny Tanner,' figuring it would be dull. Boy, oh boy, was he wrong.

"Richie, may I present Mr. Saget," Steve said.

Bob was sitting on a little red leather love-seat with booze surrounding him, and when he saw Richie, he jumped out of his seat and shook his hand. Richie stood there a bit star struck, to say the least. He always got nervous when it came to meeting famous people. "Good to uh, meet you, Mr. Saget."

"Bob,' please," He told Richie. "I really enjoyed your set! You pull no punches, tell it as it is. I love how you can't tell if you're bullshittin' for comedy sake or if you're just telling shit that happened to you."

"Haha, thanks. Most the jokes I tell are either inspired by real events with a twist, or just shit that is funny to me and hopefully will be

funny to others, too."

"That's the way to do it! You're gonna make it, kid."

Richie didn't really like being called 'kid' but at this stage in his 'career' he wasn't about to complain.

"Yeah," Rich said. "When a joke lands it's the best. It's the hecklers that bug me," Richie sighed.

"We all get them. If you play it right, you can use a heckler to your advantage. Hey, you wanna know the secret to comedy, Kid?" Saget asked. Richie didn't even have time to answer. "Be your own worst critic. Deconstruct every joke you have, find the cracks and flaws in them, think of every possible angle a heckler could come at you with. Always have a comeback ready to naturally deflect them. There's no better way to win a crowd over than by ripping a heckler a new asshole. And when all else fails, just say fuck 'em! They're the ones paying to see you, so give 'em their money worth! Am I right, Steve?!"

"Nail on the head, Bobby!"

"Thanks," Richie nodded. "I'll remember that."

"Damn right you will," Bob smirked at him. "Because I want you to be my opening act for my upcoming tour."

"...Who.. wha..." Richie's jaw had literally dropped.

"Look at him, he's gonna wet himself!" Bob laughed. Richie gave a nervous chuckle. "No, look, I love what you did out there. You are one funny mother fucker!"

"Thanks," Rich said, and took a chance on something right then and there that could have either ruined his career, or been a huge hit. Make or break time. "I guess I am. Your mom is probably the best fuck I've had in ages."

Steve's eyes went wide in horror, and his words seemed to be heard by everyone else in the room, practically at the whole party.

Oh, shit.

And Bob stared at him for what felt like an eternity. Maybe that had been a mistake. But then to his amazement, Bob began laughing. That same loud, hyena-like laugh he'd heard in the theater.

"That's what I'm talking about, you sick mother fucker!" Bob patted him on the back. "Listen, do you have representation?"

"Like a manager?" Richie asked, somewhat startled by the question, still reeling from his crack about Bob's mother.

"N-"

"Drop'em if you do, Steve's your man now."

"Huh?"

Steve Covall rejoined the conversation, putting his hand on Rich's shoulder. "You're not going to make it in this business without a manager, Rich. And I'd like to bring you into the big times."

"Seriously?" Richie asked. As it stood, no, he didn't have a manager yet. In truth, no one had ever even offered. Richie had been a lone wolf who figured that while he was getting the laughs, he'd never make it big. Now that had changed, and never once as a kid when begrudgingly watching fuckin' Full House that one day, he'd be standing here, presented with an opportunity that would literally change his life.

"What do you say? You joinin' the band?" Bob asked and Richie, flabbergasted at this point, eagerly accepted.

"Yeah!" Richie exclaimed, but Bob looked a bit disappointed. A sort of 'you can do better than that' kind of look. Richie took the hint. "Fuckin' shit yeah, let's fuckin' rock this bitch!"

"That's what I'm talkin' about!" Bob and Steve took turns slapping Rich on the back so damn well near hard that he had to grab his glasses before they went flying off his head. But Bob ended up snagging them anyway.

"First things first," he tossed them to Steve. "Get the kid some better specs, those things look like they're held together by fuckin' paperclips."

"Tape and gorilla glue, actually," Rich said with a laugh, now blinded and squinting through the blur.

"We're going on tour next week. Get yourself some new material, nothing kills a career faster than the same old tired jokes. Do you do any other impressions?" Bob asked.

"Working on it," Richie said.

"Good, because your voices are really funny!"

Even though he could barely see, Rich saw a door of opportunity open up before him, and slipped into a voice he thought would win them both over.

"Hey, what do you mean I'm funny?" Richie asked in a voice that was unmistakably Joe Pesci. "What do you mean, you mean the way I talk? I'm funny how, I mean funny like I'm a clown, I amuse you? I make you laugh, I'm here to fuckin' amuse you? How am I funny?"

Bob stared in awe, it was probably the best Joe Pesci impression he'd ever heard and told him as such. "Do that on stage and you'll win the room, no shit!"

They spent the rest of the night drinking and bustin' each others balls with ridiculous jokes. Richie even tried some new material out and got some tips from Bob on what worked and what didn't. He signed with Bob Corvall the next day, and that's when things really took off.

They indeed went on tour together, and it was so surreal, standing on the largest stages he ever had as he opened for Bob Saget. Richie followed the advice he'd been given for his next few performances, and it surprisingly worked like fucking magic. Eventually he stopped relying solely on his voices and dropped the shtick of just making fun of himself, instead now, playing a sort of 'villain' on the stage.

"So," Richie said into the mic. "I recently discovered just how big of a fucking asshole I really am."

The crowd reacted with scattered laughter.

"No, get this," Richie continued. "My friend tried to set me up with this girl that, from first glance, was pretty good looking. Now, I always say looks don't matter to me because without these big coke-bottle glasses I'm honestly as blind as a fuckin' bat. Honestly like 9 out of ten times-" He stopped, considered, "seven out of ten times, it's true. Looks don't matter. And for what it was worth, this girl was fine enough. Plus, she had the biggest pair of balloons I've ever seen in my life. But my friend neglected to tell me just how bat-shit fuckin' psycho crazy this chick was. Stage 5 clinger, about an eleven out of ten on the psych-o-meter if you get my drift. I'm not kiddin, though, these tits were like, gigantic, like double-trouble, all you can eat titty buffet. Anyway... So, I get her back to my place after a disastrous date, she lets the twins out ... And the big-ass padded bra she was wearing reveals the biggest, or I should say, the most small-side-of-average disappointment of my life. Just like everything else in fucking Hollywood, they were fake as shit. So I start accusing her of false advertising and how that shit should be illegal... Long story short, I fucked her, but it was nothing to write home about."

The crowd hoo'd and holler'd in a mixture of laughter and boo's, but he only shrugged.

"So a week goes by and she apparently gets in touch with my friend and rants about how I went on a tirade about her having tiny fake-ass boobs. He calls me up all pissed off, going, 'What the fuck, Tozier! You said looks didn't matter to you!' To which I humbly reply, being a gentleman and all, 'Well, yeah! When I thought she had dem big ol' titties!'"

This time the audience laughed, some of them gasped, and there stood Richie, only smirking.

"What? I told you, I'm a fucking asshole," Richie smirked. "Am I wrong?"

Most of the crowd laughed, all except for one man that made the sound of what Richie thought was a cow taking a shit, of "boooo!" All at once and remembering Bob's advice of having a comeback for every possible angle a heckler could attack at, this prompted the

voice of Christopher Walken to respond from Richie's mouth, nonchalantly firing back;

"Baaahhooo...?' That sounds... t' meeh... like the noohise a woman makes... When Mistah dying coahw down thaaahre.. drahops his troousarhs. Cue Thuh Coahw bell!"

The impression was spot-on. Practice had indeed made perfect. The crowd didn't react at first, they all seemed amazed that it sounded as if Christopher Walken himself had taken over the mic and fired back for him. After the beat of silence, there were thunderous applause, only outweighed by the sincere laughter that filled the room.

The year went on like that and it was so great. When it finally ended, Rich looked forward to touring with Saget again, but Steve informed him that he brought a new opening act for every tour he did, and this one had been a hell of a ride, but it was now over. Steve assured him that it didn't mean anything though, as the opportunities were opening up for Rich everywhere, and he slowly was rising to megastardom, taking the place as one of Steve's favorite clients.

Richie had auditioned to be in Last Comic Standing season 6, but due to his material not being appropriate for TV, he lost out in favor to Jim Tavaré. Producers had warned him that if he told his jokes on TV the way he did on stage, the majority of his act would be 'nothing but multiple beeps.' Richie refused to change his act, and was not allowed to compete.

But that didn't stop him from succeeding elsewhere. Rather than beg club owners to let him perform now, they were the ones calling him. They all wanted 'that voices guy who had opened for Saget.' His phone rang by the hour and he had appearances booked on his calendar for months. His notoriety seemed to be exceeding him, he was even turning down bigger clubs because he was getting offers to appear on TV shows. He thought his bit on 'Late Night' was as big as he was every going to go, but that was until Steve managed to get him his own special on Comedy Central Presents. The thirty minute version that aired on cable had to be severely edited, but the uncut hour-long 'dirty' version was a huge hit. The CD and DVD sells alone were enough to bring in the bank he needed to get a new place, a nice little-big penthouse, and after all those years, he finally traded in

his old, tired car and was able to go to a real lot to purchase a brand new one.

Oh, and he did indeed visit The Record Parlour again on several occasions, this time paying the funny old man and rebuilding his album collection and then some. On one of his last visits, he noticed that old piece of paper he'd signed his then-worthless autograph on a few years back was now hanging on the wall, framed. Right next to all the greats. Rich smiled.

"Guess you made it, huh kid?"

"Yaaa," Rich said in one of his silly cartoon voices. "Dat's wight, wabbit."

"Then what are you still doing shopping here?"

"Nostalgia," Richie winked.

"Oh, fuck you," the man said in a humorous tone.

"Hahaha, fuck yooooouuuu!"

One day while cruising down Vermont Ave in his new red Mustang one afternoon, he came to a halt in usual heavy traffic flow and while Tom Petty's 'Even the Losers' played from his stereo, Richie looked to his right to see a face that was very fucking familiar looking back at him. Not directly at him, mind you. The face of this ominous looking man was on big blown-up gray-scale poster, hanging up in the window of Skylight Books. Right next to the Los Feliz theater, which he had been to before and had vaguely reminded him of a theater he went to as a kid, but he couldn't quite place what it had been called. Just like he couldn't truly recall why the face in the poster looked so eerily reminiscent.

It wasn't of a man he'd seen before, he didn't think so, at least. But the eyes, it was something about the his eyes. Richie had gotten lost for a minute and hadn't realized the traffic had started to move again, until the cars behind him began honking their hearts out.

"Alright, alright!" Richie flipped them the bird to the fellow road patrons and then hooked his right signal, pulling over to the curb and

shutting his car off. He got out and just stood outside of the store for what seemed like ten minutes, just looking at the poster and all the books on the shelf beside it. The man was an author, obviously, but something about him struck such a familiar cord with Rich.

"Have you read his work?" The voice of a stranger asked.

"What?" Richie jumped, seeing a young woman in glasses as thick as his own standing beside him now. "No."

Above the poster of the grim looking man was his name printed in huge font, 'BILL DENBROUGH.' He hadn't said the name aloud, but thinking it made some foggy memories come to the surface. Something about... Shark Puppy? What the hell.

"He's pretty good," the girl said. "Not my favorite, but for horror books he writes well enough."

"Oh, yeah?" Richie asked, his attention going back to the window.

"I mean, he has a tendency to ramble sometimes and drift away from the plot. If I was his editor I'd cut a good chunk out of most his work. But you know how writers do," the girl in the glasses giggled.

"I guess so," Richie said. In truth he'd never been much for reading, short of the biographies of his comedic idols. Then again, he was never the kind of person who would willingly wander into a library or bookstore, on purpose.

"Hey..." The girl trailed off, and Richie again looked over at her, noticing how she appeared to be studying him now. "Haven't I seen you somewhere?"

"Not unless you have a morbid sense of humor for crude and politically incorrect jokes," Richie grinned.

"Oh my god, you're him!" She suddenly shrieked.

Rich had to admit, it was still new and interesting if not even a bit surreal and off-putting to be recognized by fans. To even be able to say he was getting to the point where he had fans was baffling.

"Him,' I am," Richie extended his hand. "I'm R-"

"Rainn Wilson!" The girl practically leaped towards him. "I love you in 'The Office!'"

Goddamn it ...

Being a new celebrity had it's perks, but it also had it's downside. Being mistaken for other people, for example. This was the seventh fucking time Rich had been confused for that guy, but who was counting? To date he'd never even seen The fucking Office.

Then again, looking the girl over now, he couldn't see her as being part of the crowd that would willingly go to a Bob Saget show, where he'd gotten his start as an opening act. He hated breaking all the young fans hearts, so he decided to roll with it.

"Yeah," Rich said. "That's me, all right. Good to meet you," he said awkwardly. "I think I'm gonna give this Denbrough guy a shot," he said as he started to lean away from her and in a forward motion towards the Skylight.

"Wait!" She cried. "Would you take a picture? Or, sign something for me?"

He stopped and turned back towards her, putting on his big, phony smile. Who was he to deny a fan? Still, the last thing he needed was his image all over the girls' social media with the hashtag 'I met whatever the hell the guys' name is from 'The Office!'" "I don't do personal pictures when I'm, uh," he thought fast, and pointed to his head. "Having a bad hair day. But if you want something signed-" The girl pouted, but wasted no time pulling out a black Sharpie pen. "Yes please!" Richie took it and looked around for where he was supposed to put his signature. "What do you want me to uh-" The girl undid the top button of her blouse, squishing her exposed cleavage together and for the first time now, Richie noticed how stacked this girl was.

Yowza, boss.

"Would you?" She grinned.

"Why the hell not," He smiled back, biting the cap off the marker and

sloppily writing a name that either could have been Richie Tozier or Rainn Wilson. Good thing about autographs, they were always done hastily and looked like scribbled-shit. The old man at the record store had taught him that much.

"You write too damn neat, Mr. Richie Tozier," The man had said to him. "You need a signature."

He replaced the cap to the pen and handed it back to her, which she anxiously snatched away from him. "Ohmigod thank you! Thank you!" The poor misled girl shrieked again.

"Don't mention it. You have a good one, miss...?"

"Amber," she grinned at him, rather seductively.

"You have a good one, Amber." Rich said, and made his exit from the street, and from her, into the bookstore.

It occurred to him after entering the store that, had he been a total sack of manipulative, sociopathic shit, he probably could have gotten a quick BJ from her in the restroom. But, that would be wrong. He wasn't yet at the stage in his career where he could justify taking advantage of naive fans. Especially when they weren't even technically 'his' fans... Still, he was sure there was a bit in there somewhere that he could use on stage.

Richie made his way over to the shelf of books highlighted in the window, and from the back he found a couple others written by this Denbrough guy. 'Joanna,' 'The Dark,' 'Attic Room,' 'The Glowing,' and a book about werewolves that for some reason hit really close to home for Richie, even if, just like the author himself, Richie couldn't quite understand why. He picked them all up, including the newest edition, a 'best seller' according to the books' dust-jacket.

Inspecting the image closer now, he read the little biography about this Denbrough character that seemed to be repeated with slight variations on every one of the books, always with the same picture of him as well. 'BILL DENBROUGH is a New York Times bestselling horror novelist who started his terror inspired career with his books 'Joanna', 'The Dark' and the screenplay for 'The Attic Room'. Bill grew

up in Derry, Maine, USA and this is the place that inspired him. He now lives in England with his wife (actress and model) Audra Phillips.'

Richie pulled out his phone and did a quick google search of this Audra lady, audibly letting out a gasp of 'Daaayum,' in the oh-so quiet bookstore, drawing the attention of several patrons. He smiled and went back to his phone. The woman was stunning and with locks of natural red hair. She, like the author, reminded him of somebody else from his past, though he couldn't quite nail down just who those people were. Something about his memory had been hazy ever since moving to L.A. But the tidbit of information on Denbrough's dust-jacket about growing up in Maine, specifically a place called Derry seemed to give him goosebumps all down the back of his neck. Had that been where Richie once lived?

When he got his license, Rich had put down that he'd been born in Bangor, which according to Google Maps was pretty close to that Derry place. But it was the damndest thing, he just couldn't conjure up any memories of that little town called Derry. There was hardly any information of it online, either. Just that it had once been a beaver-trapping camp. Probably still is, Richie snickered to himself. 'Amirite boys?' He suddenly heard a younger version of himself say. Where the fuck had that come from?

All at once, Richie felt like he had to get out of there. Something made him feel as if he were going to be physically ill. He almost left without paying for the books, but quickly turned around and purchased them all.

"Big fan, huh?" The geeky kid behind the counter asked him.

"No," Richie spat, hurriedly. "Just thought it was about time I got my literature on."

"Interesting choice," the kid said. "Might I suggest-"

"No, I'm good, thanks, just ring it up."

The kid sighed and did so, and the books weren't cheap. They weren't very light, either. Richie quickly estimated that it would take him the

better part of a year just to get through these door-stoppers.

"Hey..." The kid tilted his head at Richie. "Aren't you-" "Yeah," Richie shot back bluntly. "Rainn Wilson. Glad you like the show."

"... Uh... Richie Tozier?" The geeky kid looked at him oddly. "What, is that a new joke you're working on or something?" Richie stared at the kid and blinked. Fucking hell. "You bet. Take it easy!"

Richie grabbed the bag of books which felt like weights to him and ran out of the bookstore, not even caring that he'd overpaid and left about fifty bucks worth of change in the kids hands. He got back out to his car and hopped in, taking off down the road and nearly causing several traffic accidents in the process.

"Bill Denbrough... Bill Denbrough... Where do I know that name?" He said to himself. It was on the tip of his tongue but he just couldn't quite connect the dots. "Fucking.. Shit!" He slammed his hands on the steering wheel. "Come on, Tozier, get a grip, man. Where do I know that fucking name!"

Denbrough... Derry.

It all had a certain ring to it, he just couldn't quite place it. The radio blared the tune of 'Let my love open the door' by Peter Townsend, but it wasn't the original version. It was the Philip Steir remix as far as Rich could tell. As he got back to the luxurious penthouse he'd began leasing just the month prior. He figured one day he might be famous enough, like all the other wealthy celebrities of Hollywood, to own one of those gigantic mansion. But for now, he was a starving artist and had to make due with what he got from local clubs. He was just glad to be headlining, finally. No more opening acts like some kind of

-

...Loser.

That's when it hit him. He parked his car and sat there for a moment, looking down at the bag of books in the passenger seat. Richie, almost subconsciously, tapped his horn twice.

Beep, Beep (Richie.)

God, that used to annoy him so much for some reason. People used to say that to him. Beep, Beep, Richie. Whatever the hell it meant... He didn't know.

Loser. He was a loser. Denbrough, he was a loser too. They were part of a bigger group of losers. Not too big, there were just a few of them. Seven of them, he vaguely recalled now. Lucky Seven. They were sort of a club.

'Yeah, Homeschool... Welcome to the Losers' Club,' Richie forced the verbalization out. What the fuck did that mean? Who was homeschooled? And why would a group of Derry willingly be part of something called 'The Losers' Club?'

Weird.

He tried to shake the feeling off as he got into his penthouse and made himself a drink. He dropped the bag on his counter and took out the first book. 'The Black Rapids.' He figured the stories didn't have to be read in any specific order or anything, might as well start with the most recent and work his way back to the beginning. Richie walked over to his stereo and turned it on, not even sure of what to play, so he just let it go to random. Making his way out to the back of his patio, he took a seat and set his drink down, firing up a cigarette as he held the book up and inspected it.

"'The Black Rapids,' ... Well hell, Big Bill, let's see what this is about-" He had only just sat it down in his lap when the words he'd spoke echoed in his mind. "'Big Bill?' .. Where the fuck did that come from..."

Richie opened then book and began reading. The story itself was written well, as far as he knew about writing, anyway. Except that the guy had a tendency to ramble. Just went the plot got going, he'd go off for what seemed like an eternity on details that seemed like a good editor may have told him to trash. He had to admit, he'd started skimming the pages. By the time he got to the end, he felt like he should write this Denbrough guy and ask for a refund. "Wow... That ending fucking sucked."

But he had noticed something, and some weird gut feeling told him

to dig into his other books one by one. Richie spent the better part of the night doing so, and had come to realize several patterns and formulas were reoccurring in Bill's books; They were always about the underdog, the outcasts, the freaks. Losers. Most of the books took place in small towns, always in Maine. And there was always some kind of horrible monster that the characters ended up facing, probably as a metaphor for something or other, Richie however never was much one for metaphors and tended to take everything at face value.

Something about each story struck him as very familiar, though. Certain keywords and phrases, locations like 'Rock war,' '29 Neibolt' or the 'Aladdin' theater - "Aladdin!" Richie exclaimed. That was the Los Feliz reminded him of, though he couldn't remember exactly why. It was as if his memory warehouse had been locked up good and tight and there was no breaking in. Also the one thing all his books had in common was it seemed like Denrough never knew how to end them properly. After rambling on way too long and pissing away all the energy of the big finale, the books just abruptly ending and for lack of a better word, they sucked balls.

Not realizing he had spent literal hours outside reading, Richie sighed of utter exhaustion and made his way back into his home. 'The Chain' by Fleetwood Mac was playing on his stereo then. He wasn't doing well at all that night, not at all. He was thankful that he didn't have a gig - until it occurred to him that he did. Looking at the clock, it was ten 'til curtain call and he was over thirty minutes away.

"Oh... SHIT ON ME!" Richie cried out just as his phone rang. He answered it in a panic, already figuring he knew who it was.

"Rich!" It was Steve.

"Hey! How's it going? How's your mother?"

"Funny. Where the fuck are you?!"

"Steve I am on my way there now, maybe five minutes away-" Richie lied. "Traffic, man."

"Yeah, well how's it look on me that the first night my new client is

headlining, he shows up late?!"

"Just stretch it!" Richie said. Show term - Make the opening act last longer.

"I'm gonna have to, but get your ass down here PRONTO or find a new agent!"

"Steve, I'm already there. Here. Whichever! Bye!"

Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Richie hurried himself to get ready, just throwing on a blazer over his jeans and t-shirt, which incidentally would become his signature wardrobe in the years to come. Happy accident, perhaps. He flew out of his house like a bat outta Hell and the half an hour drive it would have taken him to get there, he seemed to make in less than half the time. It was a miracle there had been no traffic accidents.

He rushed into the auditorium and only took minimal shit from Steve as his opener was finishing up his set. Rich had just enough time to down a glass of bourbon and wipe the sweat off his forehead with shaking hands, before his name was announced and he fled onto the stage, greeting the crowd. As the applause slowly died down, he launched into his act.

"So does anyone else in here ever have one night stands or am I just the coolest guy in the room? Yeah, I thought so," Richie smirked. "I recently got on this new dating app, do you guys use those?" The crowd clapped, and one girl in the room hollered a "woo!" at him. "Hey, I told you, you can't suck my dick until after the show," Richie chuckled.

"Dating apps are cool, except for the fact that you don't always meet who you are led to believe you will, right? That happen to anyone else? I met this one girl and I mean, her pictures were of her ... From like ten years ago, or maybe a couple hundred pounds ago. And like, because I'm not a total dick, I had to act like I was cool with that. Overall I was, I've pounded so many plus sized chicks I'm pretty sure I officially qualify as an unintentional chubby-chaser. Haha."

"So this chick leads me to her bedroom - her house was a mess, by the way. Getting there was like going through a maze. We finally get there twenty or so minutes later and she's trying to undress all seductively, which, eh. You know, I'm figuring, I'm already here and I didn't want to waste the Viagra. So she gets up on her bed and turns around lookin' back at me," Richie mimicked the very awkward movement on the stage, looking over his shoulder at the audience. "And she goes, 'I like it from behind-'" He did a female voice and winked before turning back. "And all at once, WHAM! The end legs of her bed fucking SNAP and she tumbles to ground all 'EEEE!' Which put me in a hell of an awkward position... Because, you know, I'm trying to stand there acting all concerned. But I'd be lying if I said it wasn't one of the funniest fucking things I've ever seen in my whole goddamn life."

The crowd seemed to dig it, there was nothing like getting the whole theater laughing, even if the spot-lights blinded him from truly seeing the audience. He preferred it that way, honestly.

"So we ended up going to her guest room to take care of business, and she got all pissed off that I insisted on using protection. Play safe, kids. Almost Immediately, I realized what was going on. Just like everyone else who moves to L.A., she was hoping to 'make it' as an actress or something and it just didn't pan out. So what else was left to do but get knocked up by a guy who had? No way that was happening, so after trying several different maneuvers to do the sex, I made damn well sure there was no way she could fish the condom out of her bathroom trash and leave me with some bastard child that I'd be paying support for. I went into the bathroom and got the brilliant idea to tie the condom in a knot before I threw it away. But the damn thing was so gooey that when I went to tie it off, WHAM! It shot out like a slingshot and all those little gunky mini-Richie's splattered on the mirror, on her counter, in her sink, fucking everywhere!"

The audience mainly laughed, seeing this visual of the scenario he had created and gasping, with a few of them letting out audible 'eww's' among the crowd.

"I know, right? And now here I am trying to clean all this shit off, with her yelling from the other room 'Riiichard what are you doooooin

in there?" He did her voice again. "Finally I just threw the condom in the toilet and flushed... Which, after doing so, I realized was another huge mistake. I didn't know some brands were more flushable than others! All at once the toilet started to overflow, and I'm getting the tank off, wiggling the little thing, trying to figure out how to fix this. Eventually I said fuck it and just threw some towels down, shut the light off and thanked her for the ... 'lovely' night. I bounced the fuck out of there and as I was getting in my car, I heard her scream from inside her house, 'Whaaaat the hell is this?! Ahhhhhhhhhh!' And I just sat in my car thinking, 'dammit, Rich. This is the third time in two weeks this shit's happened!'"

The crowd laughed and roared with applause, which was somewhat bewildering to him. None the less he smiled at his own joke and waved his hand at the crowd. After doing a bit more of his set, it was finally time to call it quits for the night. He'd given them their monies worth, and always made sure to leave them wanting more.

"Thank you," Richie said the majority of the crowd, then pointed out one heckler specifically - The one Joe Pesci's voice had gotten to take a shot at; "Fuck youuuu!" Then turned his attention back to the audience as the crowd laughed. "And until next time, I'm Richie Fuckin' Tozier!"

The AC/DC tune Rich had personally selected from his ever-growing list of records played as his outro as he got his first standing ovation. He remained on the stage to give a little wave and huge grin.

This is how 'Rich Records' was truly earned his name and reputation of the comedian known for doing crazy-good impressions and telling the most absurd, crude jokes and stories, and throwing some classic rock'n'roll into the mix. Richie Tozier had finally made it, and it could only get better from here. Right?

... Right?

Ridin' down the highway!
Goin' to a show!
Stop in all the by-ways!
Playin' rock'n'roll!

Gettin' robbed!
Gettin' stoned!
Gettin' beat-up!
Broken boned!
Gettin' had!
Gettin' took!

I tell you folks... It's harder than it looks!

It's a long way, to the top...
If you wanna rock'n'roll!
It's a long way, to the top...
If you wanna rock'n'roll!